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TAGS: [MOPS](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [AF](#)

SUBJECT: BADGHIS: GOVERNOR ARMAN REQUESTS MORE US ASSISTANCE

Classified By: Interagency Provincial Affairs Coordinator Dawn Liberi f  
or reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: A subdued but confident Badghis Governor Delbar Jan Arman told Ambassador Eikenberry on August 13 that the situation in his province is difficult and getting worse. He requested U.S. support, both in troops and diplomatic efforts, to help overcome the lack of activity on the part of the Spanish PRT and other coalition forces in the area. He noted the province's need for better governance, in the form of more and better qualified government officials, including prosecutors and district chiefs. The May coalition operation in Taliban stronghold Bala Murghab brought no benefits but instead provided the Taliban a public relations victory, with 18 ANA killed. Arman called water and the Ring Road his top development priorities and welcomed the Ambassador's promise to visit Badghis after the elections. End summary.  
Coalition Troops: More U.S. Troops Needed

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¶2. (C) In a 45-minute conversation in Kabul August 13, Governor Arman reported that he found the overall situation in Badghis to be much more difficult than he had expected when he arrived in April, even coming from four years in Zabul province. The lack of access to the ring road, coupled with Badghis's isolation from Kabul and other areas, make it a more difficult province to govern than his previous post.

¶3. (C) Arman requested more U.S. troop support for Badghis, calling the current coalition forces in the province inadequate for the security situation at hand. (Note: Currently the U.S. has a Police Mentoring Unit in Qal-e-Now in Badghis, and a PMT -- Embedded Transition Team in Bala Murghab district.) He noted that the ANA and ANP are willing to fight but need foreign troops to back them up. They also need proper coordination with coalition forces. He called Badghis provincial ANP chief General Wase very strong, "the best on my team." He made a "special request" that the Ambassador weigh in with the Spanish to ensure that the new U.S. Marines planning to deploy to Qal-e-now are allocated appropriate space at the new base under construction. Without direct pressure, Arman worries that the Spanish base will not provide enough space for the incoming Marines. The governor was blunt in his assessment of the Spanish PRT: "They never fight, and they tell me their mission is only reconstruction." He said that when he arrived, the Spanish had not welcomed him, but he suggested he is slowly winning them over. His opinion of them as a security force remains very low, however.  
Bala Murghab and the Taliban

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¶4. (C) According to Arman, recent operations by coalition forces, as well as initiatives by the Afghan government, had done nothing to reduce the Taliban's strongholds. Arman remains highly critical of the Italian troops' May operation in Bala Murghab district, a Taliban stronghold, and said that he had advised strongly against the proposed four-day operation. He told the Italians that for the operation to be successful, it needed 1) to be coordinated with the ANSF; 2) to have enough troops to execute the mission; and 3) must

be on-going, with troops remaining to hold the cleared areas and other troops in pursuit of the enemy. Arman admitted that after he briefed then-COMISAF GEN McKiernan on the situation, the Italians were "not happy" and asked him if they should cancel the operation or start it slowly. Arman admitted that he did not want them to cancel the operation and then be accused of doing nothing to change the situation in Bala Murghab. The actual operation, he said, turned out just as he predicted: Inadequate force numbers and poor coordination between the ANSF and ISAF resulted in 18 dead ANSF and a "huge morale boost" to the Taliban. Bala Murghab today is no more secure than it was prior to the operation.

¶5. (C) Arman suggested that the situation became worse when IDLG Director Jelani Popal started to negotiate with the "tricky" tribal elders from Bala Murghab in June and July. Arman suspected it was done with the blessing of President Karzai and doubted the deal negotiated would result in safer and better-attended polling stations on August 20. Instead, he feels it hurt the government to be seen negotiating with the Taliban from a position of weakness.

Development Priorities  
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¶6. (SBU) Governor Arman laid out five development priorities, with improved access to potable water and completion of the Ring Road at the top of his list:

-- Water: The provincial capital Qal-e-now has no decent irrigation or drinking water system, and the minerals in the local water supply make it difficult to drink. The Ambassador noted that many other governors have also cited water issues as critical for the next phase of infrastructure development, but significant projects like dams and

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irrigation systems will need to be done on a regional or national scale, not piecemeal, to avoid unintended environmental consequences.

-- Ring Road: Arman reported that plans to extend the Ring Road through Baghdis, connecting Qal-e-now to Herat in the southwest, and Meymana, Faryab province in the northeast, have been delayed because of insecurity, particularly through Bala Murghab. "The road is the only thing that will give us security," he argued, noting it will allow ANSF patrols to gain access and provide links to other districts. The Asian Development Bank and other regional donors are funding the Badghis road projects, he said.

-- Electricity: With chagrin, Arman noted that Herat and Faryab both have electricity, but Qal-e-now had none.

-- Pistachios: Calling the 94,000 hectares of pistachio orchards a huge opportunity for provincial and national economic growth, Arman noted that the trees around Qal-e-now have been cut down for fuel in some forests. He suggested both a policing system as well as an agricultural program to plant replacement seedlings and teach conservation and resources management.

-- New City Plans: The Ministry of Urban Development is working on a master plan to build a new Qal-e-now city, said Arman, since the old city cannot not expand to accommodate new businesses.

¶7. (C) Arman highlighted narcotics as another "big problem." Badghis',s border with Turkmenistan provides several routes for smugglers and drug traffickers, said Arman; he would appreciate U.S. assistance with counter narcotics and border management. "The Spanish will probably not support this," he opined.

Governance  
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¶8. (C) More troops and better government officials are the keys to change, said Arman. "We need more troops, we need better district chiefs, governors and prosecutors." The Ambassador noted that more U.S. and NATO troops will be arriving soon to improve the security situation in Afghanistan. Arman also suggested that the United States must not wait for other countries to contribute. "That would be a mistake -- it must be the Afghans and the Americans." He asked for "political and economic support" for governors.

## Arman's Future

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19. (C) When the Ambassador asked what he wanted to do next, Arman was guarded about his post-election future. "We will talk about that after the election," he said. "But if I do not get more support from Kabul, I am too tired to be governor." He admitted that he has felt undercut by Kabul when he has tried to combat corruption on several occasions, and noted that the "phone calls from Kabul" are the bane of every governor's existence.  
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